

History of the United States I : Early Colonizations to 1877

Description of the Examination

The Subject Examination in History of the United States I: Early Colonizations to 1877 covers material that is usually taught in the first semester of what is often a two-semester course in American history. The exam covers the period of American history from the Spanish and French colonizations to the end of Reconstruction, with the majority of questions on the period of nationhood. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, emphasis is placed on the English colonies.

There are approximately 120 multiple-choice questions on the 90-minute exam, to be answered in two separately timed 45-minute sections.

Knowledge and Skills Required

Questions on the test require candidates to demonstrate one or more of the following abilities.

- Identification and description of historical phenomena (about 45 percent of the exam)
- Analysis and interpretation of historical phenomena (about 45 percent of the exam)
- Comparison and contrast of historical phenomena (about 10 percent of the exam)

The subject matter of the History of the United States I exam is drawn from the following topics.

Approximate Percent of Examination

35%	Political institutions and behavior and public policy
25%	Social developments
10%	Economic developments
15%	Cultural and intellectual developments
15%	Diplomacy and international relations

About one-third of the questions deal with the period from 1500 to 1789, and about two-thirds are on the period from 1790 to 1877. Among the specific topics tested are the following:

- The character of Colonial society
- British relations with the Atlantic colonies in North America
- The motivations and character of American expansionism
- The content of the Constitution and its amendments, and their interpretation by the Supreme Court
- The growth of political parties

- The changing role of government in American life
- The intellectual and political expressions of nationalism
- Agrarianism, abolitionism, and other such movements
- Long-term demographic trends
- The process of economic growth and development
- The origins and nature of Black slavery in America
- Immigration and the history of racial and ethnic minorities
- The causes and impacts of major wars in American history
- Major movements and individual figures in the history of American arts and letters
- Major movements and individual figures in the history of women and the family

Study Resources

Students will find it useful to study representative examples of widely used college-level textbooks and readers in History of the United States I and II, which can be found in most college bookstores. Standard comprehensive texts are typically published in two volumes, usually corresponding in coverage to the two CLEP exams (Early Colonizations to 1877, and 1865 to the Present). To prepare for either of the History of the United States exams, read thoroughly the relevant material in one textbook. Because textbooks may differ in content, emphasis, and interpretation, consult a second or third textbook on some of the major topics. New editions of textbooks are usually published every three or four years. If you are purchasing a book, it is recommended that you specify the most recent edition. When selecting a textbook, check the table of contents against the "Knowledge and Skills Required" section.

Additional detail and differing interpretations can be gained by consulting readers and specialized historical studies. Pay attention to visual materials (pictures, maps, and charts) as you study. The Internet is another resource you could explore.